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ABSTRACT

This document compiles the Forum 45 major address and the responses of three reactors. Dr. Cosand's paper seeks to define what constitutes a top quality community college president. There are many styles of presidential leadership; however, the possibility of a president's providing strong and enlightened leadership depends on his effectiveness in listening, planning and research, delegating responsibility, and on his personal integrity and consistency. The president, by nature of the office, has the never-ending responsibility of coping with both internal and external problems, including problems on the board, with other administrators, with the faculty, and with students. In addition, there are continuous problems of differing complexities to work out with the community, with local and state politicians, with business, industry, labor, the professions, and the media. The first reactor, the president of a small rural college, amplifies upon Dr. Cosand's remarks, especially with respect to the relationship between the college and the state and federal governments. The second reactor defines the setting as the dictator of the extent to which certain skills are requisite for effective leadership. The third reactor provides his own definition of a community college president, based on Dr. Cosand's model. (NHM)

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A COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT--WHAT'S THAT?

FORUM 45

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Presented at the Annual Convention of the American
Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Seattle, Washington

April 16, 1975

JC 750 555

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Seattle, Washington
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"A Community College President -- What's That?"

There are as many styles of presidential leadership as there are presidents, for certainly no two institutions are alike and no two presidents are alike. Each institution will have its own identity, its own personality, its own climate, and these will be determined by the community served by the students, by the faculty, by the administrative staff, by the board, and by the president. An incoming president will have a different style of leadership, a different personality, a different set of objectives, and will, therefore, affect all aspects of the college whether or not the president's leadership is considered strong or weak. A president is appointed to provide overall leadership for the total educational program of the college. Any lesser appointment or expectation is a prostitution of the office of the president by the appointing body, the Board of Trustees. It is heard and it is read that some college faculties, some administrative staffs, some boards, either indirectly or directly, seek presidents who can be controlled, who will not provide aggressive enlightened leadership, who will do the will of a faculty power group, an entrenched administrative staff or a board used to having its own way in the administration of the college. Colleges

which seek this type of leadership or lack of leadership cannot and will not keep up with the changing needs of postsecondary education. These colleges will be the "status quo" institutions and as such will gradually regress, following the plateau period of inaction. The pacesetter colleges are those where there is a creative tension, where there is a climate of excitement, where all concerned--faculty, administration, and board--are engaged together in the continued development of an educational program of excellence for the students and community to be served. The president of the college is and must always be the key person in this total activity for "Leadership Makes a Difference."

The administrative philosophy and objectives of the president must then be in tune with presidential leadership and not merely with presidential coordination. Leadership will indicate direction and action, and direction and action are especially needed today and will be increasingly important for the coming decade of educational change. A climate of direction and action instead of a climate of drift and inaction--established by the president--will be reflected in the attitudes and actions of the faculty, the administrative staff, and the board. Naturally this would affect the overall quality of the educational program through the excitement and high morale of the college staff.

The policy making responsibilities of a board, along with its employment responsibilities, will determine the future of the college. Boards and board members differ greatly in experience, potential, sophistication, and desire for power. Perhaps the college presidents highest priority is the education of the board with respect to the board members'

responsibilities as board members to the community, to the students, and to the staff. Failure to assume this leadership role will result in extremes. The board will be either apathetic and leave everything up to the president, or will assume administrative control and leave only figurehead responsibilities for the college president. The president has the obligation to present strong action recommendations, with supportive data, to the board for approval. The boards' responsibility is then to approve, to disapprove, or to defer for further consideration. A strong president with confidence in his or her abilities, knowledge, and leadership need have no reason for defensiveness if occasional recommendations are rejected. In fact, a 100 percent approval record may well be suspect for several reasons, none of which speak well for either the college president or the board. Once a board policy is approved, the president has no choice but to implement it through clearly stated and unambiguous administrative procedures. The ability to make decisions on the basis of policy, is a hallmark of administrative leadership. The failure to make decisions, the failure to act is an admission of weakness, as is the habit of "passing the buck" back to the board, or on to another administrator, at some lower level in the hierarchy. The college president will be emulated by the other administrators, either in strength or weakness which will be reflected in the strength or weakness of the college as a whole.

Among interested and important observers and evaluators of the strength of presidential leadership, external to the college itself, is the community, and the leadership of the other educational institutions--both public school and postsecondary. The community college by definition

is designed for and dedicated to the community to be served. The community, therefore, has the right to expect a strong quality-education program which will change in concept as the socio-economic profile of the community changes. The college president must assume a leadership role in the community through active participation in community organizations and activities, and through the continuous use of the media as a means of making visible and viable the college's educational program. The importance of the community college president's role within the local and regional educational community cannot and must not be overlooked. Both secondary and post-secondary institutions are too often ignorant about the role played by the community college, and are both critical and fearful of the rapid growth of these institutions over the past thirty years. Alleviation of the ignorance, the criticisms, and the fear must be a high priority for every community college president. Although many facets of this "education of peers" can and will be done by other staff and board members, it is the president who provides the direction and the overall plan of action. During the coming years of financial distress in higher education, the change in priorities and struggle for survival among all tax-supported agencies prescribes education from us, about us--locally, regionally, statewide, and nationally.

Just as "Leadership Makes A Difference" so does "Listening Make A Difference." As has been stated earlier, the president must provide strong enlightened leadership, both internal and external to the college. This cannot occur however, unless the president is listening to the many voices both internal and external to the college. A climate of creativity and

excitement cannot be imposed. It comes only from within through nourishment, support, and understanding. Understanding comes only through listening to those who comprise the institution--the community, the students, the staff, and the board. One of the major concerns in all colleges is the tendency to prescribe from a base of ignorance and lack of understanding. The board prescribes to the president, the president to the other administrators, the administrators to the faculty, and the faculty to the students. All of this is prescribed for the community we are supposing to serve. Who is listening and who is acting or modifying actions on what was learned through listening. Presidents, staff, board members will say, "Of course we listen and then act accordingly." But, do we? We tend too often, at all levels, to continue what was--to project from what was or is, and thus to revere the status quo. Some presidents and staffs have been and are listening and these colleges are the pacesetters. Here one finds the better ways to administer, to teach, to counsel, to serve all of the community. Community colleges gained their prestige through breaking with the traditional philosophy of the four-year college. Now is the time, and past time, to listen again to the new students, to the new community needs, and to break with the academic tradition of the community college of the 1950's and 1960's. One of the most important aspects of listening is to listen to those who have changed their curricular patterns, their teaching methodologies, their support services of counseling, learning centers, and research offices. Will we listen to one another and learn from one another? Or must we plow the same field and learn the hard way. The president's role in this climate of listening, learning, and changing is

paramount. His or her actions will be emulated by the staff as a whole.

Emulation is heady stuff. If leadership and listening are to be respected by all and perhaps emulated by appropriate staff members, then the college president must accept full responsibility for the role played by his or her office. Basic to this is the value placed on the integrity of the office for "Integrity Makes A Difference."

The president, by nature of the office, will have the never-ending responsibility of coping with both internal and external problems. There will be problems to work out with the board, with other administrators, with the faculty, and with the students. There will be continuous problems of differing complexities to work out with the community, with local and state politicians, with business, industry, labor, and the professions. There are the never-ending problems to be smoothed out with "friends." In particular, there are the complexities to be kept under control in the president's relationships with the media. Through all of these one word is supreme -- "integrity." Double talking, only part of the truth, only small or big coverups, witholding information, favoritism, etc. will create a climate of mistrust, suspicion and cynicism. This climate can negate any positive gains through strong leadership and listening. In fact, both leadership actions and listening attitudes will become suspect and the president may well have placed himself or herself in an untenable position with both the internal and external forces of the college.

All of us in education are being forced to acknowledge the growing importance of planning and research. "Planning and research do make a difference." Until recently, we were too preoccupied with growth--growth in numbers of students and staff, in curricula, in facilities, in budgets.

Today, we are faced with the distinct possibility, and many believe a probability, of a decrease in full-time equivalent students combined with major changes in student profiles with respect to abilities, interests, and motivation. To act with expediency cannot be condoned. To act without planning and supportive data may be worse than inaction. The president is faced with a major decision as to priorities. How, in a period of financial distress, can planning and research be initiated or expanded? The president is obligated, in working with the faculty and with the board, to create an understanding that without proper planning, buttressed by research data, conclusions, and actions for change may well create a situation where financial distress becomes quality distress to the detriment of all concerned, especially the students and the community. To survive with quality, business and industry are mandated to maintain a strong research and planning function--so must each community college. In addition, each president should see to it that what is learned through research and planning is made available to other community colleges in order to save time and money, and in order to better serve the students and the community.

Budgeting, personnel policies, collective bargaining, and a host of other responsibilities also help comprise the college presidency, and knowledge, ability, and leadership in these areas make a difference. Time prevents discussion of these, but such topics are being discussed in other workshops at this conference. There is, however, one other major aspect of the presidency which deserves attention. "Delegation of responsiblity makes a difference." I have always considered that a basic element of anyone's responsibility is to provide an opportunity for growth. Far

better than sharing our resources with others is to reveal their resources to themselves. Not only then must the president have confidence and belief in himself or herself, but there must also be a deep and abiding belief in others, especially in those faculty members and administrators who staff the college. The president and the board, together, should see that an opportunity for growth in knowledge, ability, and confidence is provided all staff members. This growth will be reflected throughout the total educational program, and therefore, the quality and excellence of the administration, teaching, and learning centers will be enhanced. At the same time the board should see that both board members and the president are provided learning opportunities for professional growth. Delegation of responsibility throughout the college is a necessity, but it becomes meaningless unless those receiving such responsibilities are knowledgeable, able, and sufficiently confident to assume them. Once delegated, the president then has the responsibility to be kept informed.

In conclusion, the community college president is the one essential person within the structure of the community college. All others--the board members, the administration, the faculty--have their roles and they, too, are essential to the educational program, but the president must set the example:

in belief in the college and its mission,

in overall knowledge about the college itself and the services it provides its students and its service community,

in integrity and openness,

in giving beyond oneself,

in service to the college,

in service to the community,

in service to other segments of education,

in interest in what other segments of the community are thinking and needing,

in up-to-date theories of education and management,

in an acceptable breadth of knowledge about the business, industrial, labor, and professional interests of the community served.

The community college presidency is one of the great positions in postsecondary education. It is demanding, consuming, challenging, exciting, overwhelming at times, but all in all a great privilege and most rewarding. The office deserves the strongest leadership available for "Leadership Makes A Difference."

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Response to Dr. Cosand's Paper
"A Community College President - What's That?"

The rapid change period in which higher education finds itself has produced many consultants, administrators, and college professors who are advancing numerous suggestions for coping with the period of rapid change in the hope that a better order for higher education will emerge. There are always a few professionals who inevitably surface as both the most respected and the best informed. Joe Cosand is one of these. His paper, entitled "A Community College President -- What's That?," is typical of the quality of work Dr. Cosand has done in behalf of higher education. In brief, one could say his paper is on target, and speaks pointedly to a definition of what constitutes a top quality community college president.

I find myself reacting to various parts of the paper, as would be expected of one who is president of a small, rural community college in a state where rapid change has taken place in higher education during the past ten years. It is true that each institution will have its own identity, its own personality, and its own climate, and these in turn will be determined by the community served by the students, by the faculty, by the administrative staff, by the board, and by the president.

The institution is also affected in no small part by the posture taken by the state legislature and the role which it has assumed for itself in the structuring of higher education. When budgetary decisions made by some state legislatures have serious impact upon program structure, a serious struggle for determining institutional identity develops. As the complexity of state boards, commissions, executive and legislative budget offices develop, more time is demanded of the president in working with the mechanics of budget development, which leaves too little time to devote to the real problems of

educational programming. Certainly the board, the faculty, the students, and the community have every right to expect overall leadership from the president for the total educational program of the college. However, these same groups must also become aware of the ever-increasing demands made by the state as a percentage of funding and policy making is taken over by the state.

Another area affecting the time devoted to educational programming by the president is the extent to which federal funding of programs becomes big business with the community college. What the federal government provides for enrichment may also be removed at a later date. In the interim, if the state does not see fit to pick up where the federal government leaves off, the wisdom of the president in electing to utilize federal funds in the first place may be seriously challenged.

Dr. Cosand refers to the fact that faculty, board and administrative staff must seek a president who possesses strong leadership qualities if the college in turn is to avoid becoming a "status quo" institution. I heartily agree with this. However, any president must help the board and staff understand what is meant by the duly defined shared governance procedures which have been adopted by some institutions, oftentimes with the encouragement of state bodies. The president must make every effort to educate faculty in the true meaning of shared governance. They should understand that they participate in the shared governance process but that final decisions are made by the president in keeping with the policies as established by the board.

The establishment of formal negotiations between faculty and administration raises much concern regarding whether or not both shared governance and collective bargaining can exist jointly within an institution. Certainly the leadership ability of the president is to be put to the acid test in such

circumstances. The parallel which Dr. Cosand draws between presidential leadership and presidential coordination becomes a real concern where collective bargaining and shared governance vie for position. Reference to the fact that the pacesetter colleges are those in which there is a creative tension and a climate of excitement also excites me to respond to probably the most basic problem affecting not only Otero Junior College, but many other community colleges today.

Where state legislatures are involved in the budgeting and funding process of the community college, the FTE (full-time equivalent) becomes the single most important measuring device in the eyes of the legislatures when determining funding. Creativity and the climate of excitement need not always be related to the availability of funds. However, most innovation and change are directly related to the need for increased funding. The problems of a president in a small, rural community college will differ from the problems of the president in the large, urban college as they relate to creativity and innovation. Where the large, urban-oriented community college is often faced with a shortage of funds to provide for an ever-increasing number of FTE, the opposite may be true in a rural community college. A college faced with the necessity of starting a new program faces some of the same problems faced by a new business. It takes start-up capital. The large, urban community college may have the FTE on hand to justify a request to the legislature for funds, but the small, rural community college may be told by the same legislative body to produce the FTE and it will then consider funding. The leadership of the rural community college president is put to the real test at this point to provide the necessary research and other data if he is to convince the legislature of the necessity for increased funding.

The community college which has retained a large measure of local autonomy and has most of its budget funded from a local community college district, will likely have less difficulty convincing the local board and the community of the need for funds for new programs than will the community college which answers to a strongly centralized state structure. A president should exercise every bit of leadership potential he has to assure a funding pattern for a minimum of three years when any new program is to be implemented.

I am in complete agreement with the point Dr. Cosand made regarding the education of the board and its responsibilities as board members to the community, to the students, and to the staff. A board can only fulfill its responsibilities as it hears the action recommendations of the president and such recommendations must be backed up with supportive data to make board action a thing of confidence. Such board action based on fact, even though at times it may be contrary to the recommendation of the president, will leave the president free to return to the board with additional recommendations with no loss of effectiveness.

A strong president should be able to approach his job responsibilities with the faculty and students with the intent of making decisions which may not always be completely acceptable in the eyes of others, yet will leave no doubt either as to the direction of the college or as to the responsibility for the final decision making. Reference to delegation of responsibility to staff members with the full intent of expecting them to exercise their charge is also an indication of a strong president. The effectiveness of such delegation of responsibility can only be assured, however, if the president is willing to regularly review the decisions which have been made by staff members. Only the president who is willing to listen to the many voices, both internally

and externally, will survive for long as a leader. The pressures of funding and the ever-threatening need for possible staff reduction make listening today more important than ever before.

Dr. Cosand's emphasis on the necessity for community colleges to break with the traditional philosophy of the four-year college and to dare to be creative is most important at a time when higher education is facing the most serious pressures ever thrust upon it. Community colleges which enjoy the creative leadership of a strong president will be the ones where the nullifying of financial pressures may have a chance of succeeding.

Dr. Cosand refers to the never-ending responsibility of coping with both internal and external problems of the community college. All of us in education recognize this condition and the person, once again, most responsible for setting the record straight regarding such problems is the president of the institution. He must be ready to accept the challenge of such ever-threatening problems as opportunities to demonstrate that he does believe in his leadership ability and that he accepts the challenge of education at the community college level at a time when many people are painting the picture of gloom and some voices are sounding the voice of doom. The faculty and the students watch the president with continuous intensity and look for any signs which they may interpret as having either a positive or negative impact upon the institution.

If the president believes that the single most important objective of education is to reveal truth, he must lead the search for truth as it relates to the institution, and then reveal same to the college community. The state of Colorado attempted to give this assurance to the public by the passage of the Sunshine Law. I maintain that a good president has always subscribed to

his own Sunshine Law and that no legislation should be needed to make this a reality. As those most interested in the community college learn to know that the president has every intention of providing all the facts affecting the college, support for presidential leadership will be forthcoming. Such revelation of fact will not always assure the president of a perpetually happy administration, but it will make possible an honest exchange of fact between opposing parties, and out of this, hopefully, better education for the student will emerge.

Dr. Cosand's statement that the board should see that both board members and president are provided with learning opportunities for professional growth does raise some concern. Not only do I agree with this statement, but it should also be an opportunity provided the staff. However, at a time when budget restrictions are being imposed, particularly in states where state dollars account for a major portion of the budget, certain economies must be exercised. Travel and workshops off campus, as well as national meetings, will oftentimes get the ax. This is a tragedy, but if and when this condition develops, every effort must be made by the president, once again, to provide opportunities on campus for good learning experiences for staff. In the long run, we know this is not enough, but let us hope this would only have to be a stop gap measure until such time as the inflation/recession period has been stabilized and essential program streamlining has been completed.

Dr. Cosand has very ably identified the quality of person to serve as a community college president. The charge to the educational fraternity is to continue the search for those men and women who can provide the educational

leadership as described in "A Community College President -- What's That?"

W. L. McDivitt, President

Otero Junior College

La Junta, Colorado

AACJC, April 1975

Response to Dr. Cosand's Paper
"A Community College President--What's That?"

Presented by Dr. Abel B. Sykes, Jr.
at the AACJC Convention in
Seattle, April 1975

Dr. Cosand's paper, "A Community College President--What's That?" "covers the waterfront" as he explores the many facets of what a community college president is, or better, what are the many role expectations of the person who occupies such a position. He has clearly set forth the minimum requirements of effective leadership. Of course, his delineation is valid insofar as he outlines the multiple skills that must be utilized in order to provide effective presidential leadership. However, while all successful presidents must possess these skills to a greater or lesser degree, the extent to which they are utilized will vary with the community in which the president serves. The essence of my response is that the setting dictates the extent to which certain skills are requisite for effective leadership. The requirements of presidential leadership in one community college may be distinctly different from those skills required in another setting. The universality of these skills, while necessary as a minimum, do require lesser or greater development as dictated by the particular environs in which the community college district exists.

A president functioning in a community where a high level of visability exists by the college might well find it necessary to call upon different skills of leadership. Appropriately, the office function will vary widely in administrative design at both the local and state level, and it, therefore, follows that it will adopt the unique characteristics of the individual community. As an example, the president in a rural college in a state such as, say Oregon, which generates its income from student fees, local tax levies, and state funds, would require presidential skills necessary to develop effective rapport with state officials, and/or legislators and local political officials. A continuing, effective relationship with that particular "public" is mandated for nominal survival. Contrast that particular presidential style with a multi-campus college in an urban setting in, say the Bay area of Northern California. Here the skill requirements might be quite different. Constant relationships with activists in professional and support staff, a changing, and perhaps restless, student body, a very articulate and "up-tight" community, and continual needs to reassess and redefine the direction of program development all require different leadership skills. In this setting "listening" may be of a higher priority than "active participation in community organizations and activities."

In essence, the president does not operate in isolation, but survives within an institution which is a collection of many people with many interests, and with these various interest groupings possessing the dedication and organizational ability to articulate their needs. The president operates at a particular point in this sphere of power, indeed at the very apex, for the presidency is inherently a position of power. The extent to which this influence maintains itself or withers is dependent upon the skills of the occupant. The times, circumstances, leadership, and ability all contribute significantly to the influence of the president.

The nature of the community college and, indeed, all higher education is a continuing attempt by other groups, both internally and externally, to share or divert, if not remove, the power and influence held by the office of the president. The extent to which these efforts are successful will, in my opinion, depend to a large degree upon the person's ability and understanding of the philosophy of the junior and community college, as well as his ability to interpret and to implement these goals consistent with the aspirations of the community served.

The establishment of goals with the assistance of the community and the accommodation of these goals into educational practices with measurable results are the absolutely minimum expectations of an individual functioning in such an office. The administrative design, the intellectual and organizational skills necessary to accomplish these goals are basic, as Dr. Cosand has outlined; but above all, the wisdom of knowing when necessary skills are to be utilized, and where individual settings and individual circumstances require the utilization of these skills is of utmost importance. In fact, in my opinion, such wisdom will determine whether the occupant of the office will have a successful tenure, succumb to mediocrity or worse, or perhaps best, opt for early retirement.

March - 1975

Joe B. Rushing, Chancellor
Tarrant County Junior College District
Fort Worth, Texas

"The Community College President - What's That?"

Response to an address by Dr. Joseph P. Cosand

We have just been privileged to hear a very excellent presentation on the question, "The Community College President - What's That?" Permit me to touch on a few points made by Dr. Cosand. On some cases my position may differ a little from his, but on others, I will merely attempt to expand.

Dr. Cosand stated that the administrative philosophy and objectives of the president must be in tune with "presidential leadership" and not "presidential coordination." It is possible that a president can be merely a coordinator and be successful by some definition of the term -- long tenure in a position, getting along with his faculty, community, and even students. Coordination is not an easy job. It is an important task of an effective community college president. But if coordinate is all the president does, then the degree of success may be measured only by how willingly the constituency (public, faculty, students) accepts something less than a dynamic community college.

To coordinate is to manipulate the ideas and programs of other people. The president in today's community college must be more than that. The president must, above all, be a leader. The president must be a source of ideas, not only to generate them but, perhaps more important, to recognize and adopt good ideas of others.

When there is a vacuum in leadership, a board has two alternatives. It

can remove the president who is not providing the leadership and hire someone who will do so. The other alternative is for the board itself to step in and fill the leadership vacuum. This second option is probably much worse than the vacuum. It not only is bad at the time but can create a damaging administrative environment for many years to come.

Dr. Cosand has already pointed out that one of the most important roles of a college president is the education of his board. When a new president, regardless of how good he might be, steps into a situation where the board has become deeply involved in administration of the college he has a difficult, if not impossible, task to perform.

The speaker made the point that when a president is successful in his role, he is likely to be emulated by the staff as a whole. Certainly this emulation is, as he described it, "heady stuff." It is flattering, but there is caution to be exercised here. Emulation is not only heady stuff - it can be dangerous stuff. Just as a president must be able to develop his own administrative style, so should his immediate staff members be able to operate with their own styles. The last thing a chief administrator needs is a group of "yes" men. Loyalty is important, but the president must create a climate in which the members of his immediate staff feel free to develop their style. The tendency of staff members to emulate their president places a tremendous responsibility on that position. He must be certain that respect and admiration are well founded.

Let me comment briefly on the president as a delegator of responsibility. This is more than just a principle of organization or a management technique. The delegation of authority may be more significant in the community college than any

other segment of post secondary education. This is primarily because of the unprecedented growth of two-year institutions. Twenty-five years ago 9% of all U. S. college students, about two and one-quarter million, were enrolled in two-year institutions. Last fall, 1974, one-third of the more than ten million post secondary students were in two-year colleges. This growth, itself, means that delegation of authority is absolutely essential in the development of an institution. Delegation of authority is not something for the administrator who feels insecure. Yet a growing institution makes it absolutely essential that the president, and other administrators, be able to delegate to subordinates many of their responsibilities as the institution grows. Furthermore, decision-making should be moved to lower and lower levels of an institution as it matures and as its staff develops as a working team.

In delegating authority and responsibility, the president must be willing to accept some mistakes. By mistakes, I do not mean that subordinates be allowed too many gross errors. The president must be willing to accept the fact that on occasion they will do things which he, if in the same position, would not do. In delegating authority the president must not draw the lines too tight. He must allow the person to whom authority is given the right to some maneuvering room. At the same time, however, the president must keep in close enough touch with those who have been given this authority in order to judge effectiveness. Delegation of authority can result in the greatest rewards for the succsssful president. Nothing is more satisfying than to look about you and see members of your staff performing as strong educational leaders within their own areas of responsibility.

What is the Community College President? There is no simple answer, but

I would summarize with these points:

First of all, it is a man or woman with a creative mind who is always thinking beyond the immediate problems of day to day administration. Secondly, the president is one who has the wisdom to surround himself with competent people who have the ability to make the institution move. Three, the president must have the self assurance and the courage to give these people the freedom they need to perform effectively. Fourth, and last, the president is one who is always in the role of college, professional and community leader.

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